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ABSTRACT

Objectives for students are provided in this unit of study which suggests diverse learning that can take place in conjunction with a class field trip to a farm specializing in the raising of pigs. Following a brief description of specialization in United States livestock production, the unit lists factual information to be learned, e.g., information about modern barns and equipment, uses of automation, the life history of pigs raised for market, the farmer's investment and risks. The next section lists seven affective goals for students, e.g., appreciating the efficiency of farming operations, respecting the contribution of American farmers, and wanting more information about farming. The final section gives seven suggestions for teaching the unit. Activities include using print and audio-visual reference materials, inviting a county extension agent to speak, constructing a model farm scene, predicting the daily activities of a farmer specializing in raising pigs, and discussing the meat products derived from pigs. (JHZ)

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A Visit to a Pig "Hatchery" on the Farm

(A Suggested Unit of Study)

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A VISIT TO A PIG "HATCHERY" ON THE FARM

(A Suggested Unit of Study)

Farming in the United States, as well as other occupations and vocations, is experiencing continuous change. The American farmer specializes in a particular aspect of farming such as dairy farming, poultry raising, or hog production. Even in the area of hog production, a farmer may keep sows for farrowing purposes, or he may "specialize" to the point of feeding pigs only, to where they are ready for market. The American farmer has become a specialist in the production of livestock.

The production of pork, a popular meat on the dinner table of many Americans, has undergone many changes on American farms. Buildings and equipment used in the raising of pigs has changed much during the last two decades and earlier. Heavy manual labor involving the carrying of water in buckets and shoveling of feed by hand is a thing of the past. However, much money is needed by the farmer who has the latest equipment in the raising of pigs. Prices received for these farm animals fluctuates much, generally, in a given year. Planning for a given amount of income is not possible.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE UNIT

The following are suggested understandings for pupils to realize:

1. A farmer engaged in the raising of pigs as a specialized area of farming may have 100 to 120 or more sows (mother pigs) on the farm.

2. Buildings used for farrowing purposes are large and may house 24 or more sows.

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3. The inside of the building can be kept at a similar temperature as compared to a modern home. With the turning of the thermostat, the inside of the barn can be kept at 65 to 70 degrees or any desirable temperature in colder areas of the United States. Electric fans or air conditioning can keep proper temperature readings in summer.

4. Since the interior of buildings are heated and cooled properly, pigs are raised during every month of the year. A decade or more ago, these buildings were not heated and thus small pigs may have died due to the cold weather. Or, the temperature readings may have been excessively high in summer for the sow to care for her baby pigs adequately.

5. Water for the sows is not carried by hand but reaches its destination through automatic waterers.

6. In a modern barn, each sow is kept in a small cage with adequate room only for getting up and lying down. The baby pigs are located next to the sow, but they stay outside the cage. They can come inside the cage at any time for nursing purposes. This approach has saved the lives of many pigs since they cannot be stepped on or crushed to death by the sow as readily as compared to the traditional approach of a sow being in a large area with no safety precautions for the baby pigs.

7. A hog farmer has to be a good manager since the investment in buildings and equipment can be very high. Some farmers have augers which auger feed for sows to the proper destination. Therefore, an adequate number of pigs needs to be weaned from each sow (perhaps 7 to 8 pigs weaned on the average from all sows on a farm would represent a good number).

8. Sows that do not produce enough pigs per year are sold on the market. After producing four different litters of pigs, most sows are also sold on the market.

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9. After pigs are weaned at the ages of five to seven weeks, they generally are sold privately, or at the sales pavilion, where further "specialization" of farming occurs such as raising these pigs until they are ready for market.

10. Cholera is a disease of pigs which can cause considerable loss in profits. Numerous attempts are being made by states to stamp out hog cholera.

The following are suggested skills and attitudes for pupils to realize:

1. Appreciate the concept of "specialization" in American farming, such as a farmer's major emphasis may be placed upon the raising of pigs.

2. Appreciate the efficiency of farming operations whereby one farmer can produce much pork due to the use of modern equipment and buildings.

3. Respect the ideas of others pertaining to discussions inside and outside the classroom.

4. Respect the contributions of American farmers in producing more food of higher quality than ever before.

5. A desire to want more information on the raising of pigs and farming in general.

6. A desire to engage in problem solving activities involving questions pertaining to the raising of livestock, as well as utilizing the problem solving approach in daily living.

7. A desire to improve in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

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TEACHING THE UNIT

When learning activities are provided for pupils, they should be interesting, purposeful, meaningful, and provide for individual differences.

1. The teacher and pupils can collect pictures to put on the bulletin board. Suggested pictures can include (a) modern buildings for the raising of pigs, (b) sows in "cages" with baby pigs nearby, (c) a farmer adjusting the thermostat in the farrowing house to provide for ideal temperature readings, (d) sows having access to automatic waterers and feed coming through an auger.

Through viewing the display, pupils can be stimulated to ask many excellent questions. These questions could well form the basis for problem solving activities.

2. The county extension agent and/or 4H Club agent could be invited to the classroom to discuss questions raised by the class as well as present other pertinent information pertaining to the raising of pigs. The possibilities of utilizing slides, filmstrips, and films with the presentation should be explored. Possible questions to have discussed could be the following:

(a) Why has the raising of pigs rather recently become highly specialized?

(b) Why are sows placed in "cages" rather than moving in a larger area with their litter of pigs?

(c) What are some factors that cut down on profits of farmers when raising pigs?

Adequate time should be available for discussing scenes from slides, films, and filmstrips as well as answering general questions that pupils raise.

3. A model farm scene for the raising of pigs can be developed by pupils with the guidance of the teacher. Pupils and/or the teacher may

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bring to class model sows, baby pigs, fences, and buildings. These models can be compared with pictures on the bulletin board and from recent farm magazines which contain information pertaining to the raising of pigs. A discussion of the model can guide pupils in asking important questions as well as wanting to find answers to these questions. Accuracy of understandings developed within pupils is of utmost importance.

4. Pupils can read from a variety of reference sources in getting needed information to answer questions. Reading materials should be on a variety of levels to provide for each pupil in the classroom. Ample visual aids that are accurate, colorful, and interesting which appear in the reference sources help pupil achievement. A discussion of ideas gained should follow the reading activity.

5. Each pupil in the classroom can write what kinds of work he would be doing in a given day when playing the role of a farmer who specializes in the raising of pigs. Following the writing activity, pupils can discuss their ideas within small committee consisting of four to five members. They can evaluate their ideas in terms of ideas expressed by other children. Proper standards for having a discussion should be followed. Inaccuracies in ideas presented need to be evaluated, and additional learning activities must then be provided for pupils.

6. The teacher can develop a series of good questions in which pupils reveal understandings obtained by discussing answers to the questions orally and/or in written form. When thinking of suitable questions, the teacher needs to think in terms of objectives pertaining to understandings stated in the unit. The teacher needs to determine if pupils have realized the intended objectives of the unit.

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7. Pupils with teacher guidance can discuss the final objective in the raising of pigs and that is to provide meat for the consumer. A drawing or picture showing the major cuts of pork from a butcher hog should be used in the discussion. Meat products that would be brought into consideration would be bacon, ham, pork roasts, pork chops, and others. Useful products of pigs other than meat could also be brought into the discussion such as the use of pigskin for making gloves and brissels for making paint brushes.